

CONDEMNING THE RECENT ATTACKS AGAINST THE STATE OF ISRAEL

SPEECH OF

HON. JOHN D. DINGELL

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 19, 2006

Mr. DINGELL. Madam Speaker, I rise today with great sadness over the events in Lebanon.

I believe we must speak with one voice that Israel has a right to defend itself. I believe we are unanimous in our opinion that Hezbollah began this conflict; and I believe that we are unanimous that Iran and Syria continue to destructively meddle in the emerging democracy of Lebanon.

This resolution comes at a time when Lebanon—a potential unwavering ally to the United States, a western looking democracy, has become an unfortunate proxy in a war between Israel and extremism.

Right now, there are 5,000 of my constituents who are facing bombing raids and a harrowing escape from war. They were in Lebanon visiting friends, relatives, childhood homes, or just enjoying Lebanon's sites, and now they are in a war zone. As their representative, my first responsibility is to them.

The events of the last week have been horrific. The violence on both sides of the Israeli-Lebanon border has escalated, and more and more people, mostly civilians, have seen their lives forever changed.

Innocent Israelis and innocent Lebanese have been pulled into a conflict not of their own making. The "Peace of the Brave", that Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin gave his life for, is today a lost hope.

Diplomacy, which the last Administration was criticized for using too much, seems to be a dirty word today.

This House, which after each Middle East conflagration brings a resolution of resolve and solidarity to the floor, could do much more to alleviate the suffering of the Lebanese.

Last summer, we passed unanimously a resolution that said, the United States would support efforts to enhance Lebanon's sovereignty. The same resolution said, "The United States should aid the people of Lebanon in their efforts to restore the separation of powers, the rule of law, and a proper respect for fundamental freedoms of every citizen."

We promised a commitment to the people of Lebanon that is not entirely reflected in this resolution. We said we would support them, and in my view the best way we can support them is to bring about a cessation of violence.

Israel's right to defend itself is absolute, but I am concerned that the current action will make it impossible for Lebanon's small military to properly assert itself along the troubled border.

We should support Prime Minister Tony Blair's plan to expand the international force along the southern border. We should also begin to rethink our own aid package to Lebanon's democratic government.

The United States can truly change hearts and minds in the Middle East if we commit ourselves to helping to rebuild Lebanon's infrastructure, help professionalize and equip their national military, and provide the economic

assistance they will need to keep their restive population employed and prosperous.

That is where I believe this resolution should be focused, and I believe it is in that omission that this Congress' policy is woefully inadequate.

The events of the past few days are heart-breaking. Not only because the unfolding violence involves our dear, and unwavering ally, Israel but also because it has sucked in Lebanon, a fragile nation that has had a bitter history and has only recently begun to reemerge from its dark past.

Madam Speaker, most tragically it was only 6 years ago that we were on the cusp of something almost magical—peaceful coexistence in the Middle East. The engagement of the United States was vital to that.

The brave dream laid out by Yitzhak Rabin was shattered by an assassin's bullet. The brave concessions by Ehud Barak and the support of President Clinton almost realized that dream.

But I believe we can get back to that moment. I believe it will take a fully engaged United States. I believe it will take a substantial investment on our part as a Congress to provide Lebanon and Israel with the assistance they need to overcome this crisis and reestablish security along their border.

Unfortunately, this resolution does not address these issues, and is an inadequate statement of policy to the parties who are friends of peace.

Madam Speaker, at this time I want to enter into the RECORD the names of twelve members of the Bzeih family who were killed as a result of the fighting—they have family in Michigan that held a memorial service for them on Sunday.

Hajji Fatme Bzeih, 80 years old; Hajji Thanya, 74 years old; Souad Nassour, 38 years old; Mariam Naem, 52 years old; Mohamad Naem, 17 years old; Malaak Naem, 17 years old; Hussein Naem, 11 years old; Naem Naem, 24 years old; Ammal Bzeih, 42 years old; Khouloud Bzeih, 18 years old; Farah Bzeih, 12 years old; and Aziza Bzeih, 9 years old.

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SPEECH OF

HON. JAMES P. MORAN

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 19, 2006

Mr. MORAN of Virginia. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H. Res. 921, which expresses the United States House of Representatives' support for the government and people of Israel at this most difficult time, and also extends its condolences to the families of all the innocent victims of the ongoing violence. I further wish to express my condolences to the Americans who are stranded or trapped in Lebanon, the West Bank and Gaza amidst the crossfire between Israel, Hezbollah and Hamas. My thoughts are with them at this time.

Though I support this resolution, I feel it falls short in failing to call for an immediate cessation to the ongoing hostilities, for an end to the loss of civilian life and the destruction of

property that is occurring in Israel, Lebanon and the West Bank and Gaza. Violence, death and destruction are the unfortunate consequences of war. But, here, these consequences are especially unfortunate because they have been experienced almost entirely by innocent civilians from all sides of the conflict, rather than its actual combatants. Over 200 innocent Lebanese civilians have been killed, with at least a thousand more injured. This destruction of innocent lives must immediately come to an end.

It is the responsibility of our government to protect Americans everywhere and lead them to safety during times of war. It's estimated that approximately 25,000 Americans are in Lebanon. Yet after 7 days of fighting, the government has only managed to evacuate a few hundred. It is now reported that 7,000 more Americans are scheduled to be evacuated by naval ship to Cyprus by week's end, but this is still not enough. I urge the administration to increase the pace at which it is evacuating Americans from Lebanon.

The administration must play a different, far bolder and more balanced role in resolving the current Middle East hostilities. When it comes to the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the administration has been disengaged for more than 5 years. Over the past 3 weeks, we have seen the disengagement.

Starting now, the United States must be willing to again engage itself, directly and forcefully, in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. We have played an important role in the prior progress that has been made toward peace and stability in the Middle East. We must resume this role. Secretary Condoleezza Rice must immediately lead the efforts for a multilateral diplomatic return to the peace process, and hang in there until real fundamental reconciliation is achieved.

Finally, I am deeply concerned about the impact the current crisis will have on the long-term prospects for peace in the Middle East and upon future generations in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza, and Lebanon. A continuation of the violence and hatred will only serve to harden feelings and widen the gap now separating the people of this historic and cherished part of the world, and to make the securing of a real and permanent peace in the region more difficult and elusive than ever. Israel must learn to get along with its neighbors and vice versa.

Sometimes conditions need to hit bottom in the short term before they can get better in the long term. My fervent hope is that a decade from now, we will look upon these times as the bottom of the descent, and the beginning of a wondrous ascent, led by people of good faith in the Middle East and throughout the world, that ended the hatred and enmity between Israel and its neighbors, and produced the lasting peace that the peoples of the region pray for.

TRIBUTE TO MAJOR CHARLES
IVAN BITHOS

HON. DENNIS MOORE

OF KANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 20, 2006

Mr. MOORE of Kansas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to offer my heartfelt appreciation and

congratulations to a distinguished American military service member on the occasion of his retirement. Major Charles Ivan Bithos, of Kansas City, Kansas, has served the United States since 1974, serving in the Army, the Army Reserves, and the Army National Guard. Major Charles Ivan Bithos has been awarded numerous medals and honors for his exemplary service and dedication to the United States Armed Forces.

No other group of Americans has stood stronger and braver for our democracy than troops and our veterans. I strongly commend and appreciate the sacrifice that individuals such as Major Bithos have made in the name of protecting and defending the United States.

In honor of this great occasion, I am proud to share my admiration for dedicated public servants such as Major Bithos and offer both him and his family my most sincere gratitude for his service.

IN RECOGNITION OF MICHAEL J. PARSONS, NEWLY ELECTED BOARD MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FEDERAL CREDIT UNIONS

HON. SHERWOOD BOEHLERT

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 20, 2006

Mr. BOEHLERT. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today to recognize Michael J. Parsons, the President/CEO of First Source Federal Credit Union on his recent election to the Board of Directors of the National Association of Federal Credit Unions (NAFCU). Mike Parsons has been a vocal supporter of credit union issues at both the state and national levels.

Mike's election to the NAFCU Board is just one more in a long list of accomplishments that has spanned 13 years as President/CEO of First Source Federal Credit Union, including his previous service as District President for the New York State Credit Union League.

As the President/CEO of First Source Federal Credit Union, Mike has focused on ensuring that his members receive helpful, personal service that caters to the needs of individuals and their financial goals. Through his credit union, Mike Parsons continuously demonstrates First Source's commitment to the financial wellness of the entire community. Most recently, Mike worked to have First Source support the Mohawk Valley Contractor's Guild, described as an "incubator for the development of small contracting companies in inner city Utica."

Mike's involvement to improve the lives of others can be further illustrated in his commitment to the Central Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired, School and Business Alliance, the Community at Sunset, and volunteering with the American Heart Association and Upstate Cerebral Palsy Association.

It is because of the good work of Mike and others like him that the credit union movement enjoys the success it has today. Such service is the hallmark of the credit union movement and I wish Mike the best of luck in his new role as a member of the NAFCU Board of Directors.

SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL

HON. JIM McDERMOTT

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 20, 2006

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, it was with unwavering support for Israel, its safety, security and right to exist, that I cast a vote today against House Resolution 921. Hezbollah, not Israel, started this conflict with an ambush, and Israel has every right to defend itself. There is no doubt about that.

Nor is there any doubt anywhere about America's deep and abiding commitment to Israel.

A resolution in the House of Representatives will not change what the world already knows, but it might encourage what the world already fears: a wider war with greater casualties, undermining fragile but crucial support for Israel among Arab nations, and further endangering Israelis and other innocent civilians across the region.

I am especially troubled by the fact that H. Res. 921 goes far beyond reaffirming our unwavering commitment to Israel by declaring unlimited support for potential military action anywhere in the region. The resolution says we: "support Israel's right to take appropriate action to defend itself, including to conduct operations both in Israel and in the territory of nations which pose a threat to it."

This raises the ominous prospect that the House has given the administration a pre-recorded vote to support any action, at any time. Could that include a military strike on Iran's nuclear facilities? The resolution is a blank check, and we know that policy has failed in Iraq, and has only incubated further violence and terrorism.

No one can for one moment accept rockets in Haifa, Nazareth, or anywhere in Israel. But demanding that the Lebanese government rein in Hezbollah while bombs rain down on a variety of targets, some civilian, is not the answer.

Widening the war will inflame tensions, increase casualties and decrease any prospect for a permanent peace. The United States can best support Israel and the Arab world by vigorously pursuing an end to the violence, the resumption of a peace process and a commitment to unite the region to isolate terrorist groups and all who oppose a just and lasting peace for all people.

[From the Daily Star, July 19, 2006]

BACK TO BEIRUT, READY TO DEFY ISRAEL

(By Rami G. Khouri)

I must be one of the few people in the world trying to get into Beirut, rather than flee the city that is being bombarded daily by Israel, with explicit American approval. Israelis should grasp the significance of this, if they ever wish to find peace and a normal life in this region.

My wife and I were on a trip in Europe when the fighting broke out last week and we could not return directly to our home in Beirut. So we have returned to our previous home in Amman in order to find a reasonably safe land route back into Lebanon. I want to return mainly because steadfastness in the face of the Israeli assault is the sincerest—perhaps the only—form of resistance available to those of us who do not know how to use a gun, and prefer not to do so in any case, for there is no military solution to this conflict.

Of the many dimensions of Israel's current fighting with Palestinians and Lebanese, the

most significant in my view is the continuing, long-term evolution of Arab public attitudes to Israel. The three critical aspects of this are: a steady loss of fear by ordinary Arabs in the face of Israel's military superiority; a determined and continuous quest for more effective means of technical and military resistance against Israeli occupation and subjugation of Palestinians and other Arabs; and a strong political backlash against the prevailing governing elites in the Arab world who have quietly acquiesced in the face of Israeli-American dictates.

The Lebanon and Palestine situations today reveal a key political and psychological dynamic that defines several hundred million Arabs, and a few billion other like-minded people around the world. It is that peace and quiet in the Middle East require three things: Arabs and Israelis must be treated equally; both domestically and internationally the rule of law must define the actions of governments and all members of society; and the core conflict between Palestine and Israel must be resolved in a fair, legal and sustainable manner.

Because these principles are ignored, we continue to suffer outbreaks of military savagery by Israelis and Arabs alike, for the sixth decade in a row. The flurry of international diplomacy this week to calm things down was impressive for its range and energy. But it will fail if it only aims to place an international buffer force between Hezbollah and Israel, and leave the rest of the Arab-Israeli situation as it is.

Protecting Israel has long been the primary focus of Western diplomacy, which is why it has not succeeded. For decades now Israel has established buffer zones, occupation zones, red lines, blue lines, green lines, interdiction zones, killing fields, surrogate army zones, and every other conceivable kind of zone between it and Arabs who fight its occupation and colonial policies—all without success. Here is why: protecting Israelis while leaving Arabs to a fate of humiliation, occupation, degradation and subservient acquiescence to Israeli-American dictates only guarantees that those Arabs will regroup, plan a resistance strategy, and come back one day to fight for their land, their humanity, their dignity and the prospect that their children can have a normal life one day.

In the past two decades, with every diplomatic move to protect Israel's borders and drive back Arab foes, the response has been a common quest to strike Israel from afar—because the core dispute in Palestine remains unresolved. Three Arab parties to date have missiles of various sorts that can strike Israel from greater and greater distances: Iraq, Hamas and Hezbollah. All three have made the concept of buffer zones militarily obsolete and politically irrelevant. New buffer zones imposed by the international community to protect Israel, while leaving Arab grievances to rot, will only prompt a greater determination by the next generation of young Arab men and women to develop the means to fight back, some day, in some way that we cannot now predict.

Piecemeal solutions and stopgap measures will not work any more. Ending these kinds of military eruptions requires a more determined effort to resolve the core conflict between Israel and Palestine. This would then make it easier to address equally pressing issues within Arab countries, such as Hezbollah's status as an armed resistance group or militia inside Lebanon, which itself is a consequence of Israeli attacks against Lebanon and the unresolved Palestine issue.

In Israel's determination to protect itself and the parallel Arab determination to fight back, we have the makings of perpetual war. Or, for those willing to be even-handed for